



DORCHESTER COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

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Hurlock MD 21643
(410) 943-4331

Dorchester County Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting
January 18, 2023 – Central Branch Meeting Room/Virtual

Minutes

Attendees: Crystal Henningsen, Julie Kennedy, Anne Whales, Cathy Burtman, Talibah Chikwendu, Amber McGinnis, Frances Windsor, Kierra Farrare, Dana Paterra, Lalita Kelly, Clinton Weems, Wyrta Myster, Susan Klise, (Friends of the Library), Patty Kaczmarei (Friends of the Library)

Call to Order - 6:37pm

Approval of Minutes (minutes approved)

Director's Report

Audit Update –

The rough draft has been completed and submitted to the State. The final draft is currently under revision with the auditors. The County funding request is due at the end of January and requires a copy of the audit. If the final copy is not available, the rough draft will need to be submitted.

Personnel Update -

A new Library Associate was hired for the Central Branch. They will begin work at the Library in February and they have some previous public library experience. The Hurlock hourly position remains unfilled. The interview process remains challenging with many candidates not showing up for the interviews. Public libraries have moved beyond the traditional concept of quiet, calm institutions with their primary focus on reading. The modern community center atmosphere with a focus on helping the community in various ways, including outreach and active programming, has proven to be a deterrent for some candidates. The Hurlock position and Central Library Clerk position will be posted again in February.

The ongoing search for a candidate to fill the Circulation Manager position was unsuccessful and the qualification requirements prevented current staff from applying. As a result, the decision was made to modify the requirements to allow employees without a Bachelor's Degree to apply if they were willing to complete a managerial course. This allowed for the promotion of Liana Sewell to Circulation Manager. Ms. Sewell will begin her new position on January 2 and has been enrolled in a Gale managerial course.

Facilities Update -

The ARPA grant funds were received from the City of Cambridge and have been applied retroactively to the Meeting Room work already completed with no additional documentation needed. The other ARPA funds will be used to fix the doors and further upgrade the Meeting Room.

The front porch lights were replaced, increasing light and security along the front of the Central building. Travers Electric is being contacted to provide a quote for installing new electrical outlets in the Meeting Room and 2 data ports to support Chesapeake College's virtual classroom grant. This will benefit other Meeting Room users and library programming.

The downstairs doors automatic mechanisms are broken, with the main entrance slamming when used and creating a safety hazard. Salisbury Door was contacted at the end of December, but has yet to assess the situation due to scheduling and staffing shortages. The Library is also still awaiting the installation of new automatic buttons and mechanisms that were requested and approved as part of the fiscal year 2022 ARPA grant awarded from the State. Due to the urgency and danger of the Main Lobby door, another company is scheduled to see if something can be done in the immediate future.

Library Closures –

Due to staffing shortages, both branches of the Library had to repeatedly close. The shortages are the result of illness and open positions, and present major problems. Until this is resolved, returning Hurlock to full service hours is not an option and the Library may need to modify the Central Branch's hours, despite our best efforts not to do so. The Library will be tracking this trend over the next few weeks. If it continues, hour modification may be required and may need to be considered on an annual basis if COVID-19 trends continue. This unfortunate situation also resulted in an interview/newspaper article in the Dorchester Banner, which was shared throughout the State library system. The Library and staff received a lot of support from the other rural library systems and former Directors of those systems. They shared that it was good to hear someone be honest and direct about the problems we are all facing.

COVID-19 Leave –

With COVID-19 continuing to affect staff, many who are newer and do not have a cushion of accumulated leave. The previously enacted 10 days of COVID-19 leave would be a huge help to staff so that they did not need to choose between leave without pay and working while sick. The motion to reinstate the 10 days of COVID-19 leave was made and the motion was approved. These hours will be applied to our current fiscal year.

County Council Budget Request -

The Library has not yet received the due date for the annual funding request, but it should be soon, as it is typically due by end of January. Ms. Henningsen is working on the FY24 budget and will be requesting: a 4.5% cost of living increase for the staff at \$28,331, matching the increase for State employees, and an additional \$17,000 to bring staff salaries into mid-range with comparable positions in other Eastern Shore libraries, bringing the total request to \$45,331. Other amounts (insurance and FICA costs aside) will mirror FY23's budget because we are on track for the midpoint of this fiscal year.

The budget will be completed early next week and emailed out for approval.

Collective Bargaining -

Unions are beginning to form in some of the larger libraries on the Western Shore. Some of the unions attempting to enter into the libraries are not necessarily library related and therefore cannot adequately represent their employees. To help protect employees, Maryland libraries are being asked to stand together in support of a bill that will limit the types of unions that are allowed to recruit library employees. The Eastern Shore libraries are not being asked to testify or write letters of support at this time, but will need to stand in solidarity and present support for the bill on Legislative Day. We are still in the phase of bill development and there are no talking points as of yet, but more information will be sent to the Board as things progress.

Legislative Day -

February 15th is Legislative Day in Annapolis. There will be no evening reception, but there will be a breakfast reception. Board members are invited to attend.

Old Business - None

New Business -

Current and new Board members introduced themselves to everyone. We welcomed 3 new Board members at

tonight's meeting. Two members from the Friends of the Library also attend the meeting to introduce themselves and shared a brief discussion of donated materials and preventative pest measures. Ms. Henningsen and Ms. Kennedy will follow up these members to brainstorm more ideas regarding donations and fundraising in the near future.

Nominating Committee -

The Board still has 4 remaining openings. Several potential candidates were discussed and will be contacted.

Adjournment - 7:24pm